EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
A more secure world:
Our shared responsibility
United Nations
Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel
on Threats, Challenges and Change

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Executive Summary

In his address to the General Assembly in September 2003, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned Member States that the United Nations had reached a fork in the road. It could rise to the challenge of meeting new threats or it could risk erosion in the face of mounting discord between States and unilateral action by them. He created the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to generate new ideas about the kinds of policies and institutions required for the UN to be effective in the 21st century.

In its report, the High-level Panel sets out a bold, new vision of collective security for the 21st century. We live in a world of new and evolving threats, threats that could not have been anticipated when the UN was founded in 1945 – threats like nuclear terrorism, and State collapse from the witch's brew of poverty, disease and civil war.

In today's world, a threat to one is a threat to all. Globalization means that a major terrorist attack anywhere in the industrial world would have devastating consequences for the well-being of millions in the developing world. Any one of 700 million international airline passengers every year can be an unwitting carrier of a deadly infectious disease. And the erosion of State capacity anywhere in the world weakens the protection of every State against transnational threats such as terrorism and organized crime. Every State requires international cooperation to make it secure.

There are six clusters of threats with which the world must be concerned now and in the decades ahead:

- war between States;
- violence within States, including civil wars, large-scale human rights abuses and genocide;
- poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation;
- nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons;
- terrorism; and
- transnational organized crime.

The good news is that the United Nations and our collective security institutions have shown that they *can* work. More civil wars ended through negotiation in the past 15 years than the previous 200. In the 1960s, many believed that by now 15-25 States would possess nuclear weapons; the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has helped prevent this. The World Health Organization helped to stop the spread of SARS before it killed tens of thousands, perhaps more.

But these accomplishments can be reversed. There is a real danger that they will be, unless we act soon to strengthen the United Nations, so that in future it responds effectively to the full range of threats that confront us.

Policies for prevention

Meeting the challenge of today's threats means getting serious about prevention; the consequences of allowing latent threats to become manifest, or of allowing existing threats to spread, are simply too severe.

Development has to be the first line of defence for a collective security system that takes prevention seriously. Combating **poverty** will not only save millions of lives but also strengthen States' capacity to combat terrorism, organized crime and proliferation. Development makes everyone more secure. There is an agreed international framework for how to achieve these goals, set out in the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus, but implementation lags.

Biological security must be at the forefront of prevention. International response to HIV/AIDS was shockingly late and shamefully ill-resourced. It is urgent that we halt and roll back this pandemic. But we will have to do more.

Our global public health system has deteriorated and is ill-equipped to protect us against existing and emerging deadly infectious diseases. The report recommends a major initiative to build public health capacity throughout the developing world, at both local and national levels. This will not only yield direct benefits by preventing and treating disease in the developing world itself, but will also provide the basis for an effective global defence against bioterrorism and overwhelming natural outbreaks of infectious disease.

Preventing **wars within States and between them** is also in the collective interest of all. If we are to do better in future, the UN will need real improvements to its capacity for preventive diplomacy and mediation. We will have to build on the successes of regional organizations in developing strong norms to protect Governments from unconstitutional overthrow, and to protect minority rights. And we will have to work collectively to find new ways of regulating the management of natural resources, competition for which often fuels conflict.

Preventing the spread and use of **nuclear, biological and chemical weapons** is essential if we are to have a more secure world. This means doing better at reducing demand for these weapons, and curbing the supply of weapons materials. It means living up to existing treaty commitments, including for negotiations towards disarmament. And it means enforcing international agreements. The report puts forward specific recommendations for the creation of incentives for States to forego the development of domestic uranium enrichment and reprocessing capacity. It urges negotiations for a new arrangement which would enable the International Atomic Energy Agency to act as a guarantor for the supply of fissile material to civilian nuclear users at market rates, and it calls on Governments to establish a voluntary time-limited moratorium on the construction of new facilities for uranium enrichment and reprocessing, matched by a guarantee of the supply of fissile materials by present suppliers.

Terrorism is a threat to all States, and to the UN as a whole. New aspects of the threat – including the rise of a global terrorist network, and the potential for terrorist use of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons – require new responses. The UN has not done all that it can. The report urges the United Nations to forge a strategy of counterterrorism that is respectful of human rights and the rule of law. Such a strategy must encompass coercive measures when necessary,

and create new tools to help States combat the threat domestically. The report provides a clear definition of terrorism, arguing that it can never be justified, and calls on the General Assembly of the UN to overcome its divisions and finally conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism.

The spread of **transnational organized crime** increases the risk of all the other threats. Terrorists use organized criminal groups to move money, men and materials around the globe. Governments and rebels sell natural resources through criminal groups to finance wars. States' capacity to establish the rule of law is weakened by corruption. Combating organized crime is essential for helping States build the capacity to exercise their sovereign responsibilities – and in combating the hideous traffic in human beings.

Response to threats

Of course, prevention sometimes fails. At times, threats will have to be met by military means.

The UN Charter provides a clear framework for the **use of force.** States have an inherent right to self-defence, enshrined in Article 51. Long-established customary international law makes it clear that States can take military action as long as the threatened attack is imminent, no other means would deflect it, and the action is proportionate. The Security Council has the authority to act preventively, but has rarely done so. The Security Council may well need to be prepared to be more proactive in the future, taking decisive action earlier. States that fear the emergence of distant threats have an obligation to bring these concerns to the Security Council.

The report endorses the emerging norm of a **responsibility to protect** civilians from large-scale violence – a responsibility that is held, first and foremost, by national authorities. When a State fails to protect its civilians, the international community then has a further responsibility to act, through humanitarian operations, monitoring missions and diplomatic pressure – and with force if necessary, though only as a last resort. And in the case of conflict or the use of force, this also implies a clear international commitment to rebuilding shattered societies.

Deploying military capacities - for **peacekeeping** as well as peace enforcement - has proved to be a valuable tool in ending wars and helping to secure States in their aftermath. But the total global supply of available peacekeepers is running dangerously low. Just to do an adequate job of keeping the peace in existing conflicts would require almost doubling the number of peacekeepers around the world. The developed States have particular responsibilities to do more to transform their armies into units suitable for deployment to peace operations. And if we are to meet the challenges ahead, more States will have to place contingents on stand-by for UN purposes, and keep air transport and other strategic lift capacities available to assist peace operations.

When wars have ended, **post-conflict peacebuilding** is vital. The UN has often devoted too little attention and too few resources to this critical challenge. Successful peacebuilding requires the deployment of peacekeepers with the right mandates and sufficient capacity to deter would-be spoilers; funds for demobilization and disarmament, built into peacekeeping budgets; a new trust fund to fill critical gaps in rehabilitation and reintegration of combatants, as well as other early reconstruction tasks; and a focus on building State institutions and capacity, especially in the rule of law sector. Doing this job successfully should be a core function of the United Nations.

A UN for the 21st century

To meet these challenges, the UN needs its existing institutions to work better. This means revitalizing the **General Assembly** and the **Economic and Social Council**, to make sure they play the role intended for them, and restoring credibility to the **Commission on Human Rights**.

It also means increasing the credibility and effectiveness of the **Security Council** by making its composition better reflect today's realities. The report provides principles for reform, and two models for how to achieve them – one involving new permanent members with no veto, the other involving new four-year, renewable seats. It argues that any reforms must be reviewed in 2020.

We also need new institutions to meet evolving challenges. The report recommends the creation of a **Peacebuilding Commission** – a new mechanism within the

UN, drawing on the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, donors, and national authorities. Working closely with regional organizations and the international financial institutions, such a commission could fill a crucial gap by giving the necessary attention to countries emerging from conflict. Outside the UN, a forum bringing together the heads of the 20 largest economies, developed and developing, would help the coherent management of international monetary, financial, trade and development policy.

Better collaboration with **regional organizations** is also crucial, and the report sets out a series of principles that govern a more structured partnership between them and the UN.

The report recommends strengthening the Secretary-General's critical role in peace and security. To be more effective, the Secretary-General should be given substantially more latitude to manage the Secretariat, and be held accountable. He also needs better support for his mediation role, and new capacities to develop effective peacebuilding strategy. He currently has one Deputy Secretary-General; with a second, responsible for peace a d security, he would have the capacity to ensure oversight of both the social, economic and development functions of the UN, and its many peace and security functions.

The way forward

The report is the start, not the end, of a process. The year 2005 will be a crucial opportunity for Member States to discuss and build on the recommendations in the report, some of which will be considered by a summit of heads of State. But building a more secure world takes much more than a report or a summit. It will take resources commensurate with the scale of the challenges ahead; commitments that are long-term and sustained; and, most of all, it will take leadership – from within States, and between them.

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